

VZCZCXRO7268
RR RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHPW RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHTA #3350/01 3550224
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 210224Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1400
INFO RUEHAST/USOFFICE ALMATY 0071
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1849
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE 0340
RUCNCLS/SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 003350

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN - O'MARA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PHUM](#) [OSCE](#) [SOCI](#) [OEXC](#) [KDEM](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: NAZARBAYEV'S INDEPENDENCE DAY ADDRESS

ASTANA 00003350 001.2 OF 002

SUMMARY

¶1. President Nazarbayev delivered his annual Independence Day address on December 14. His remarks largely focused on Kazakhstan's economic achievements and the government's successes in the socio-economic sphere, especially regarding health care, education, and pensions and other forms of socio-economic assistance. Nazarbayev also discussed political reform and Kazakhstan's 2010 OSCE chairmanship. End Summary.

ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

¶2. Nazarbayev focused most of his December 14 Independence Day speech on Kazakhstan's economic achievements and the government's successes in the socio-economic sphere. He pointed to several indicators of Kazakhstan's efforts at achieving economic diversification, noting the recent openings of a large aluminum producing complex and steel tubing factory, and the fact that Kazakhstan is currently manufacturing cars and light trucks for the first time. He claimed that agricultural production had tripled over the past ten years, and that Kazakhstan is now the world's leading country in per capita grain production. Nazarbayev explained that Kazakhstan is currently experiencing the effects of the U.S. sub-prime mortgage crisis, but claimed that in conditions where there have been cases of default and bankruptcy among large Western financial institutions, "Kazakhstan's financial system has shown itself to be stable and functioning effectively."

¶3. Nazarbayev ran through a litany of statistics pointing to the government's efforts at improving the population's living standards. He said, for example, that the minimum wage had increased 350% since 1997, and the average pension 230% since 1998. (Note: It appears he was expressing these figures in nominal terms. End Note.) He promised that by 2012, the average pension would be increased an additional 150%. Nazarbayev contended that government spending on health care had increased 13-fold over the past decade - as a result of which, over the same time period, life expectancy had increased by two years, and infant and maternal mortality had decreased by 40%. He pointed to the government's Bolashak scholarship program to send students to study abroad and the independent efforts of parents to do the same as keys to developing the country's human capital, while noting that construction had begun on a new university in Astana so that students could receive the same high level of training domestically.

¶4. Nazarbayev described Kazakhstan's 16-year period of independence as a time of radical political change and wide-scale constitutional reform. He argued that Kazakhstan is greeting each anniversary of its independence with "qualitatively new democratic standards." Nazarbayev pointed to the strengthening of parliament, political parties, and the independence of the courts; the development of local self-government; the new role of the Assembly of Peoples; and the strengthening of citizens' rights in the judicial system as indicators that the country had moved forward along the path to democracy. He said that the May 2007 constitutional changes had transformed Kazakhstan from a presidential to a presidential-parliamentary republic, with competencies of the president moving to parliament. Nazarbayev contended that Kazakhstan's political system, "in its fundamental parameters," accords with all the universally-accepted democratic norms and criteria. This, he said, was one of the main achievements of the years of independence. He argued that Kazakhstan had never previously had any liberal traditions. In a short time, however, "we established a new Kazakhstani, and a new country which has turned to the side of the civilized world."

OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP

¶5. Nazarbayev concluded the substantive portion of his speech with a discussion of Kazakhstan's selection as 2010 OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CIO). He said that in supporting Kazakhstan's CIO candidacy, OSCE member states confirmed the correctness of the "strategic vector" of Kazakhstan's development, and recognized the effectiveness of the country's economic and political model. With this decision, he continued, world society had given a positive mark to Kazakhstan's efforts to build a democratic state and develop civil society, and to the political reforms carried out in the country this year.

ASTANA 00003350 002.2 OF 002

¶6. Nazarbayev argued that a number of countries disagree in their interpretation of the OSCE's tasks and the prioritization of the organization's activities. In this situation, he explained, the principled position of Kazakhstan is the necessity of achieving compromises regarding all issues, even the most pointed ones. He said that Kazakhstan considers one of the fundamental tasks for its chairmanship to be finding common platforms and mutually-acceptable resolutions for problems, "taking into account historical and cultural specifics and the equality of all member states." Nazarbayev promised that Kazakhstan would work to develop and strengthen the OSCE's institutions, to maintain the OSCE's high principals and standards, and to develop all three dimensions of the organization's activities. He also underlined the importance of using the OSCE's capabilities for Afghan reconstruction.

¶7. Nazarbayev contended that Kazakhstan's course of development regarding democratization, free market economics, and security fully accord with the OSCE's traditions and criteria. He added that democratization of Kazakhstan's political system and the development of its civil society are, first of all, in the interests of Kazakhstan itself.

¶8. Nazarbayev explained that Kazakhstan has significant work ahead of itself to prepare for the OSCE chairmanship. This will require the efforts of all government bodies; of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of power; and of political parties and civil society. Nazarbayev argued that the chairmanship must become yet one more symbol of the unity of Kazakhstan's people, and demonstrate to the entire world an advanced, democratic, economically competitive Kazakhstan.

¶9. Shown at the venue (Astana's Pyramid) prior to the speech, and broadcast, at least in part, on national television was a documentary featuring Nazarbayev in his twenties and thirties. The film, in which the youthful Nazarbayev appears as a Komsomol leader at the Karaganda mines, received a roaring response from the audience. The footage came from films restored with a grant from the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. An attribution to the Embassy was not made during the presentation.

ORDWAY